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The Puerto de Luna

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Story

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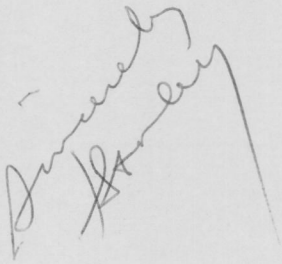
BY F. STANLEY



The Puerto de Luna New Mexico Story

by

F. Stanley

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The Puerto de Luna Story

Although a name that smacks of antiquity, Puerto de Luna is a comparatively modern town settled at the time most of the nation was involved in the Civil War. No two authors are agreed as to the origin of the name. Even residents of the town are at variance on this score, no two having the same version. Puerto (or Puerta) signified to the Mexican and people under Mexican rule "primera carta del frente que descrube el montero al tallar la baraja" (Mejicanisimos, page 893). Aware that the historic Luna family was not involved in settling the town, the name must have had its origin before the place was colonized. Some say the name mean's Luna's Gap, others say it means Gateway to the Moon because of the gap between the mountains. There are at least a dozen other explanations. The author takes liberty to add his version. The rich and powerful Luna family sent sheep herders and wood cutters to this country where firewood was cut to be sold in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and various settlements that were away from wooded areas. The word puerto implied a firewood area in colonial New Mexico, hence this may have meant the place where Luna's wood cutters obtained their firewood. Sheep herders combined the two jobs. They usually camped out for months at a time watching sheep and cutting wood .As the weather got colder they came into the settlements to corral the sheep for the winter and

sell the wood. This may or may not be the origin of the name but it is as good as any of the dozen or so offered. Firewood was disinguished from viga wood which was used in building homes. The viga usually rested on corbels so as to join walls for the top covering. Puerte, Puerto and Puerta are names used in many places in New Mexico. Most are wooded areas. Portales does not have this connotation, which helps to prove Spanish a very concrete language. With the possible explanation for the name out of the way, the next thing is to say that Puerto de Luna is on State Highway 91, eleven miles southeast of Santa Rosa. There are those who attribute the name to Coronado who slept here and noticed the brightness of the moon shining through the gap into the river valley. Some say he even built a bridge here.

Whatever name the Comanches and Kiowas had for the locality they were not about to permit colonization in what they regarded as their domain. Comancheros knew the area and used it extensively for trading purposes, but for a long time the nearest settlements were Las Vegas, San Miguel del Bado, Santa Clara, Anton Chico, La Questa. It may have been comancheros from several of these places who first decided that the bottom land along the river was worth farming and banded together to start the town. There is reason to believe that buffalo once roamed the area for many oldtimers still tell stories of their grand fathers who hunted with lances in the manner of Comanches and Kiowas. Settling the Pecos area dates back to several land grants. These were productive of Anton Chico, La Questa, San Jose, San Miguel del Bado, Pueblo, Puertocito, Las Ruedas, Colonias, Gonzolez and several others. This particular section was partly colonized because of the Agua Negra Grant. A woman was mostly responsible. Ursula Sandoval y Chavez, a native of Los Padillas near Isleta, took advantage of the absence of her husband in Durango, and on November 19, 1824 petitioned the Territorial Deputation of New Mexico (then under Mexican jurisdiction) for a

tract of land at Agua Negra "for the purpose of keeping permanently at that place the stock he (Antonio Sandoval) had there for many years; but the time having arrived for my husband to make an unavoidable journey to the city of Durango, and seeing that nothing was done with his petition, it occured to me to apply to your excellency, as I now do, in the name of my husband, praying your excellency to be pleased to order — provided there be no obstacle in so doing — that a trace containing one league in each direction be donated to my husband, at the place called Agua Negra; the losses my husband is now suffering are occasioned only by not having a sufficient piece of property in which to keep together the principal stock which composes his business. .....My husband and I are not aware that this land is claimed by anyone in the Territory...."

In listing his reasons for making the grant Governor Bartolome Baca wrote to the anthorities in Mexico ".....Nothing, most excellent sir, can be more interesting to the inhabitants of this land than the propagation of the progressive industry of the raising of horned and wollen cattle and horses, being, without comparison, more important when it is considered that individuals at the risk of the loss of their property, are covering the frontiers which are an obstacle to that branch; but the overcoming of one obstacle which, up to the present time, the government has not been able to overcome, an incalculable benefit results to the Territory with the incomparable frontiers for the protection of the settlements, the inhabitants of which are in constant terror on account of the hostilities which are so often repeated, attended with so many painful circumstances, without being able to receive any protection from the government. The inhabitants of this Territory are not yet aware of the benefits resulting from the wealthy proprietors with their stock, showing the tribes of barbarous Indians who surround us that the powerful reknown of our arm is extended to the occupation of the lands which, not long

since, were claimed by them as their inheritance, the fear of their weak and despicable arms alone making them respected. Assuring your excellency, without the least fear of being mistaken, that future generations will bless this laudable step, taken by your excellency at the time when the Navajo and other wild tribes considered that they had laid waste this precious land, I would not trouble your excellency with these remarks did I not consider them appropriate and necessary to remove the prejudices which, through ignorance or malice, are being brought to bear against such beneficient and necessary measures for the welfare of the interests of these inhabitants, under the pretext of urging imaginary obstacles against their own interest and benefit, much more to be recommended when it is considered that not long since the wealth of this Territory was confined to a few individuals without extensive means. Such is not the case at present, your excellency; and although the poverty of our fellow citizens is always set forth, this Territory contains a considerable number of persons with capital, industry, and means, who, receiving the protection of beneficient measures, would be the ornament and the source of wealth of this continent . . . Ursula Chavez, in the name of her husband, asks for one league square at the place known by the name of Agua Negra, for the purpose of keeping his herds there . . . land very distant from the settlements, land which is proper to preserve in the center of the Pecos and Del Norte rivers, on account of the scarcity of water, as well as its immediate vicinity to all the settlements in this Territory, who commonly require it very often on account of the inclemency of the weather and the occasional attacks of the savage and wild Indians..." Francisco Sarracino gave the spring known as Agua Negra, near the Pecos river to the Sandoval family. This land he called Hacienda de Agua Negra and it was bound on each side by public lands. The Pecos river was in the middle of the grant. Donaciano Vigil testified in 1857 that he remembered the occasion. On his testimony

the heirs were permitted to keep the grant when New Mexico became a part of the United States.

Colonization was slow to be sure due to Indian raids, Navajo incursions on the sheep herds, Apache attacks on the settlers and Comanche quests for horses. Channels were run from the river into farms and orchards. With the arrival of the California Column under Carleton shortly after the battle of Valverde, more military posts were established along the frontier and colonists from the Rio Bonito, La Questa, Anton Chico, San Miguel del Bado, the Gallinas country, Mora, Golindrinas and other settlements began taking up the public lands adjacent to the Agua Negra Grant. Melquides Ramirez, a lawyer and surveyor, Mercedes Carbajal, Pablito Pacheco, Miguel Chavez, Fabian Brito, Andres Saiz, Narciso Saiz, Jose Luna, Jose Maria Chavez, Pablo Lopez, Pablo Anaya, Jose Griego, Toribio Florez, Jose Chavez y Garcia, Desiderio Jaramillo, Andres Coronado, Pablo Aragon, Jose Dolores Padilla, and several others brought their families and Puerto de Luna became a sizeable settlement. One can imagine Lawyer Ramirez traveling to La Questa (present Villanueva), San Miguel, Las Vegas and other towns looking for colonists. He seems to have owned the townsite. Because of the Indians there was safety in numbers. At least nine families were established by the fall of 1862. Many of the native New Mexicans were enrolled in the Volunteers so there was little hope for a large settlement until after the war. Nor were the people of Puerto de Luna happy with the arrangement of having thousands of Indians on the Bosque Redondo reservation not too far away. Sometimes Navajos, Jicarillas, Mescaleros would break away, come to the village, and demand food, clothing and firewater. They also ran off sheep. Complaints to the authorities availed little. Some families abandoned their homes determined to stay away as long as the Indians remained at the Bosque. On the other hand there were advantages in hay contracts, wood contracts, and the sale of flour. Melquiadez Ramirez built

a grist mill on the west side of the river. The early settlers were able to sell some fruit and vegetables to the soldiers at Fort Sumner. The Indians were not always successful in running off stock. Carleton wrote to General Thomas: "There was a sharp ilttle action with the Navajo Indians near Fort Sumner, New Mexico, on the Pecos river. You will see that great credit is due Lt. Charles Newbold, U.S. 5th Infantry; to Mr. (Lorenzo) Labadie, Indian Agent; to Ojo Blanco, an Apache chief, and to several citizens (from Puerto de Luna) and soldiers named in Major Wallen's report. The extreme sevrity of the weather doubtless was the reason why it happened that any of the Navajos escaped. Lt. Newbold's name is respectfully submitted for favorable consideration by the War Department." (Jan. 11, 1864) Labadie eventually settled in Puerto de Luna and died there in 1904. Shortly after 1864 he and Carleton had a falling out. Labadie received rations as Indian Agent. Carleton wrote to the commanding officer at Fort Sumner telling him that Labadie was not entitled to them. Carleton also accused him of buying cattle meant for the Indians and building his own herd at Puerto de Luna. Carleton asked for his dismissal. The charge was later dropped.

This area was well known to James M. Giddings, a native of Kentucky, who came to New Mexico in 1835 but did not decide to make it his home until 1840, when he lived on the Pecos some four miles below the Bosque. He used the Agua Negra, and testified that it was good drinking water both for man and beast. There were times his home was used as a fortification against Indians, and he sheltered from eight to thirty-three families, most of these also working for him in cutting wood, grazing his sheep and cattle and preparing wool for marketing. These people lived at Puerto de Luna. Giddings had a great love for the land and predicted a great future for the Pecos valley. (See Testimony, Fort Sumner, June 26, 1865). He also thought that millions of cords of cedarwood for fuel and cooking could be floated down the Pe-

cos from Gusano (present Sands), Pecos, Anton Chico, La Questa and Puerto de Luna. He encouraged the planting of peach, apricot and apple trees. He thought it a good country for grapes.

A. J. Padilla, who left an account of Puerto de Luna's historic past, was of the opinion that the name honored Jose Luna who moved here from Los Lunas above Belen. He built a home on Puerto Canyon creek, south of the town. His oldest daughter married Pablo Padilla. Faustina Luna was well liked by the people for she encouraged schooling for all, and had hopes of making Puerto de Luna a center for New Mexico's ever growing wool industry. She was responsible for obtaining Jose Sanchez y Baca as a teacher in the private school at Puerto, who so inspired Jose that he became a teacher. Jose Dolores Padilla married Marcelina Castillo, a native of Cebolleta. They came to Puerto de Luna with a few cattle and some sheep. A. J. Padilla married the daughter of A. Grzelachowski, one of the most famous citizens of Puerto. He was a native of Poland who prepared himself for the priesthood, came to America and served as army chaplain at Fort Union. He became acquainted with W. Moore, trader and sutler who later settled near Las Vegas. Alexander Grzelachowski opened a mercantile store at the new settlement known as Sapello which he sold to Henry Gorke and moved to Las Vegas for a time before coming to Puerto de Luna, where he acquired the store located in the south side of the L shaped building. He also acquired a wife and a large family. His descendants are found at Pecos, Rowe, Anton Chico and other places. He became alcalde, postmaster, wool buyer, rancher, cattleman and a man of means. He spoke several languages and it is said that often when Billy the Kid came to his store to buy ammunition the outlaw would beg him to speak Latin, Polish, some Greek just to marvel at the merchant's education. Billy often liked to hear of places abroad, and although he never intimated around Puerto de Luna that he would like to travel in Europe he was

always fascinated by Grzelachowski's tales. The merchant gave his clerks to understand that Billy was not to be denied ammunition and supplies when he wanted them. He often came to town for the dances especially for a casorio or a funcion. The Las Vegas Gang, Hoodoo Brown, Mysterious Dave Mather, Dave Rudabaugh visited occasionally to steal horses or to dispose of stolen stock. Garrett and his men came by as the law officer hoped to trap Billy the Kid when he came for supplies at the store. McGrath and Frank Page were two of the clarks at the store. The story is told that once when Frank was alone in the store Billy came by to help himself with some ammunition. Page saw him filling his pockets and told him he ought to feel ashamed stealing from a man who had befriended him so often. Billy re-placed the stolen goods. Crecensiano Gallegos, a lawyer in Grzelachowski's employ, often remarked that he never came across a man with more education than the merchant. Alexander kept a mule train constantly moving between Las Vegas and Puerto de Luna and back to carry wool, fire wood, hides, goods and merchandise. Santa Rosa and other towns were not to boom until the arrival of the railroad. A. J. Padilla taught school in Puerto de Luna for twenty-one years, and lived in the town over sixty-five years which qualified him as the town's historian. Jose Dolores Padilla took an active part in the battle of Valverde as did many of the citizens of Puerto de Luna. Gathering for the fall buffalo hunt was always an exciting event for the townspeople and one they looked forward to with great anticipation and preparation until the buffalo hunter of the Texas Panhandle and the hide gatherer from Dodge brought about total extinction.

Benigno Padilla also became a merchant in Puerto de Luna. It was often visited by Miguel Otero who became governor of New Mexico during Territorial days and left a three volume account of his interesting life. Frank Page came from a family that worked hard to transform the homestead from a barren tract into an

experimental farm for raising various kinds of fruits. He became a notary and a U. S. Commissioner taking care of homestead entries and otherwise distinguishing himself in the political affairs of the town, the county and the Territory. With the growth of New Mexico more and more counties were subdivided into new counties. Puerto de Luna became the county seat for Guadalupe county. At the time the new county was carved out to take its place in the sun, General Leonard Wood was a national hero due to his exploits during the Spanish American War and in the Phillipines. Hence the new county was Leonard Wood county. Later it became Guadalupe with Santa Rosa as the county seat. There had been talk for a long time about a new county because of the long trek to Las Vegas the county seat of San Miguel county. Oddly enough while the legislature voted for the division the governor vetoed it but the legislature passed the Act creating the new county on February 26, 1891, and a committee of three men appointed to set up the county seat. Alexander Grzelachowski was so tickled over the affair that he donated one hundred yards of property for the public square to house the county offices. The courthouse was a labor of love. The rock used in the two story building was hand hewn. The cistern used by the courthouse was the special project of J. Hernandez. The large rooms were partitioned off to form the various offices used by county officials. The court room was on the upper story. Trials held there were of the usual run nothing notorious like the cases held in Las Vegas, Hillsboro, Lincoln, Mesilla, Raton, Springer. Lawyers had workable space to prepare their cases and clients. The building was of beautiful red cut stone. The jail was small and more often empty than occupied. The town and county was peaceful as a rule; now and then something happened to break the monotony. There was little or no pavement. Few tourists were attracted to the spot.

There seemed to be some controversy regarding the change to Santa Rosa as the new county seat but Puerto

de Luna eventually faced the inevitable and adjusted. In time even the school had to go the pupils being transferred to the Santa Rosa school district by bus daily which proved beneficial since it meant paved roads into town. M. Chavez and Ricardo Chavez once served as commissioners as did also other residents of Puerto. Carlos Casaus was elected sheriff. Jose Dolores Gallegos was jailor. The courthouse employed Crecenciano Gallegos and Pancho Ribera as interpreters since most of the people coming to town from the surrounding area spoke only Spanish in the early days. Toribio Flores was foreman of the jury. Like all county seats Puerto de Luna decided it needed a newspaper so Placido Baca and Crecenciano Gallegos founded the Puerto de Luna News which was actually run off the La Voz Press in Las Vegas by Felix Martinez. As it was the law that every county clerk be supplied with a copy of the paper each time it was published researchers would have had a treasure house had the building not burned down. Although rebuilt to half the size it did not re-stock the old files. Santa Rosa was to fare no better and lots of documents were destroyed. Most of what people know about Puerto de Luna comes from A. J. Padilla's writings, from Baca, Gallegos, the Grzelachowski family, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Lillie Gerhardt Anderson.

Andres Saiz married Justa Lopez, and a daughter named Martha, married Benigno Padilla. Their daughter Ignacia married P. Delgado. Isaurro was sent to school in Mexico. Later a younger brother Eluterio, was sent to join him. Andres, a stone artisan of sorts, built his own home of stones he cut and fitted to make the imposing house that often caught the eye of the traveler as he came into town. He homesteaded a place that had the best water in town. In fact all the people came to this well for water which they were permitted to take free of charge. The ten cents charged for a sixty gallon barrel was not for the water but for maintenance and to keep the well in repairs. Andres also built a dirt dam about

eight feet deep which served to irrigate his fields, and vegetable garden.

Many of the early settlers had Mexican dollars which C. H. Moore bought up for a two-thirds value to be sent to Charles Ilfeld who sent them East. This was kept quiet for fear competitors would offer a little bit more. Freight from Las Vegas to Puerto de Luna, a distance of eighty miles, varied from fifty to seventy cents per hundred pounds. Ilfeld did a thriving business with Puerto de Luna. Nor was he above giving cash advances to customers like Juan Perea. W. L. Hargrave sold sheep to Ilfeld which he bought from Frank Page who had bought them from Giddings so that the Las Vegas merchant was paying three profits. In addition to buying up sheep and wool Ilfeld also bought up land around Puerto de Luna to go into the live stock business. Nordhaus, who was in business with Ilfeld, permitted the overseers to live on these ranches without paying rent. The Goldenbergs also came into the area as merchants and ranchers. They later started business in Liberty, and when Tucumcari became a railroad town, the Goldenberg store was one of the first in the new town. The older Goldenberg had migrated into the Folsom area from Colorado with forty-five thousand head of sheep. A. G. Mills was another prominent sheep grower in Puerto de Luna. Partido Grants for sheep raising jumped from five in 1888 at Puerto de Luna to twenty-one in 1895. Although the Homestead Act of 1862 had encouraged citizens to file on small acerages and to start towns like Puerto de Luna no one was aware at the time of the potentials of the sheep industry in this area. With new Homestead Laws in 1904 and 1906 it was the policy of some merchants to homestead partidos not for colonization but for sheep grazing. One traveler was amazed at how many sheep farms there were from Puerto de Luna to the new town of Tucumcari at a time when the government and the Territorial legislature was aiming at progress by way of new railroads and new towns but not new sheep ranches which had no abodes but tempor-

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ary shacks to house the sheep herders. The traveler said that practically all of this land was in the hands of Texans, men from Oklahoma and Indiana.

x Although Charles Ilfeld was more interested in the sheep industry without sheep ranches he felt he couldn't have one without the other. Mills at Puerto de Luna sold his ranch provided he remain at the place and receive a salary, although he was more anxious to sell on a partnership basis which Ilfeld refused to do. Max Goldenberg and Hugo Goldenberg are remembered in Puerto de Luna not only for their sheep interests and mercantile store but for their efforts in trying to get a bigger and better water supply for the town. They also filed on the Mesa de Aragon as well as the Pintada places. Miguel Otero filed somewhat south of Puerto de Luna. One wonders if all the well-drilling ventures of the Goldenbergs were all for water and if there wasn't some interest in oil. A. C. Ortega, a native of the area and a clerk in the Hugo Goldenberg store at Puerto since 1903, long remembered the years of 1903 and 1904 as the drought years which also accounts for so much drilling. When L. F. Churchill came into the area to try his hand with sheep raising A. P. Grzelachowski, the son of the merchant, now deceased, received eleven thousand dollars in stock in return for the Terreros Ranch, but Churchill soon tired of the idea and in September 1908 leased out the ranch to Grzelachowski for a hundred dollars a month, but soon Tom Rodgers was in charge on the same salary basis to be replaced by Porfirio Anaya who took seventy-five dollars a month. Sometimes the sheep industry backfired and most of the hands had to be paid in goods from the various mercantile stores because there was no cash on hand to distribute as salary. Ilfeld & Nordhaus hoped to control the M. B. Goldenberg Company at Puerto de Luna by sheer force of credit. Hugo dealt with Ilfeld almost exclusively, and when Charles found out that the merchant in Puerto de Luna was making small loans to the various people in and around the town who owed Ilfeld he

didn't like it one bit. The drought was mostly responsible for the Goldenberg brothers dissolving their partnership and Max went back to work for Charles Ilfeld. When the railroad bypassed him for Santa Rosa Hugo closed his store in Puerto de Luna.

Beyond doubt the First Citizen of Puerto de Luna was Alexander Grzelachowski, born in Poland, and educated there. He came to the United States working in Ohio where he became acquainted with the future Bishop of Santa Fe, J. B. Lamy. It is quite likely that this association brought Grzelachowski to the Southwest where he was engaged in administering to the military at the newly established post of Fort Union. While in Ohio he applied for and became a citizen on October 11, 1855. This was some sort of record since he applied for his first papers in Lorain county in 1850. In addition to helping the boys at Fort Union he also served the people at Las Vegas. Captain Shoemaker, for whom Shoemaker, New Mexico, is named, always remained his friend as did the Ilfelds, Romeros and other prominent citizens of this section as far south as Dona Ana. He had served at San Miguel del Bado before going to Las Vegas and Fort Union, after which he went t othe San Felipe pueblo living there for a longer time than the other two places. He left San Felipe in November 1853 and served Cochiti until November of 1857. He also took care of Santo Domingo during the time he administered the other pueblos. It was then that he became involved in the freighting business having an army contract to carry freight to Fort Union and from Fort Union to other posts in New Mexico and Arizona. Perhaps W. Moore who first had this contract and later went to Tecalote sold his contract to him. Grzelachowski opened a mercantile store in Sapello, and did well. He sold out to Henry Goke (or Gorke) and moved to Las Vegas. He sold out in Las Vegas and went to Puerto de Luna. It was here that he branched out into politics, ranching, trading and family life. He seems to have continued his friendship with Lamy and with the

various church officials serving the parishes at Sapello, Las Vegas and Puerto de Luna. His children were brought up in the religion he always loved. Adolph, the oldest boy, learned much of his business acumen from his father. His home was eventually acquired by Cipriano Flores. At one time it was a showplace with its many flowers, orchards and trees.

Espiridon Abeyta was another well remembered citizen of Puerto. He came from a small community south of Belen settled by the Abeyta family and engaged in the comanchero trade. He was a skilled buffalo hunter who had many thrilling tales to tell about his experiences with the Plains Indians and his exploits as a hunter. He served as a freighter for a time hauling to Fort Sumner, Fort Bascom, Fort Union and Fort Marcy. Now and then a visiting padre would come in from Las Vegas or El Bado and stay with the family so as to have Mass in the home, perform weddings, baptise. It was some years before Puerto built a church, but somehow things worked out to enable the residents to have services at regular intervals. When wool became one of the major industries of the area Espiridon engaged in the wool business as well as maintaining his small farm. Emilio Abeyta, a descendant of the family, realizing that the town was slowly diminishing in size due to the growth of Fort Sumner, Santa Rosa, Anton Chico, Las Vegas and Tatum decided to move to Littlefield, Texas. Emilio, junior, had already been to high school and was anxious to pursue his studies for the priesthood. With the encouragement of Msgr. W. Bosen, Matt Schafle and others he continued through the seminary in Ohio and was ordained in the Catholic church in Littlefield. He later worked in parishes at Lubbock, Childress, Paducah, and for a short time in Pep. A younger brother also attended college for a time and left to serve his country in Vietnam where he was severely wounded. For a time it seemed that he would subcumb to the wounds but he was taken off the critical list and returned to the States for further hospitalization. He will

return to Vietnam when completely cured. Emilio, senior, takes care of the Littlefield high school and also helps keep the Mexican-American children of the town interested in continuing their education. Thus it is that Puerto people scatter throughout the nation taking their lives and their problems to strange places in order to keep up the pace demanded for making a living in this fast moving day and age. Yet people like the Abeytas always find time for an occasional trip back to renew and re-live the past when Puerto was one of the bigger communities along the Pecos.

Joe Dolores Padilla never doubted that he could make a living in this valley. He first saw it when he went on a buffalo hunt along with other experienced hunters. Gathering his small herd of cattle, his wife Marcelina, his two sons, he left the Chilili country and took root in Puerto. He helped estabish the county seat. A son named Benigno operated a large mercantile store. He was also a successful cattle raiser, a county commissioner, county assessor, a member of the Finance Board and on the Board of Regents for Highlands University at Las Vegas. His name was placed in nomination for governor but he declined. He was quite friendly with Miguel Otero who was governor during Territorial days and the two would often talk over old times when Miguel visited his ranch, the Salado, somewhat south of Puerto. Campos, Gallegos, Olona, Hinojos, Flores, Patron, Chavez, Page, Clancy, Nieto, Le Testu, all honored New Mexico names, are associated with Puerto and its activities. Frederick Gerhardt did not live at Puerto but visited there often and was known to all the residents especially to the officials at the courthouse during county seat days when Frederick would visit and give very helpful advice. Jasper de Graftenried, Dick de Graftenried, Greed de Graftenried, Buster de Graftenried, J. G. Glancy, W. L. Crockett, Robert Mingers, H. B. Metcalf, John Gerhardt, Albert Strauss, and many others helped make Puerto a place long remembered. Metcalf worked as a cowboy for a time, then

took over the Puerto-Fort Sumner mail route, taught school, kept books for Grzelachowski's mercantile company. Puerto de Luna people were not anxious to have the courthouse moved to Santa Rosa. In fact every possible means was explored for bringing in a railroad to Puerto in an effort to keep the county seat. Tensions mounted and it looked as if a small civil war was in the making. No railroad was interested. Nor was it possible to interest men of means to invest in a spur line. Puerto just wasn't the place for freight lines, mail routes, railroads. To make matters worse Santa Rosa more than had enough votes to carry any county elections. It got to be the saying "As Santa Rosa goes, so goes the county."

The church was always fascinating with its quasi-Bysantine dome, its Moorish shaped windows showing the French padre influence. It is of cut stone and destined to outlast many of the adobe homes still left in Puerto. While a fascinating building it is not really New Mexico style. Beneath the main dome is an arched window, below this a larger one housing the bell, the two wings are off set with two miniature domes. The re-modeling which gave it this effect took place in 1921. By 1880 the people of Puerto decided that they needed a church. During these years most the priests in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe were Frenchmen brought over to this country by the various French bishops. Father Camilio Bailan inaugurated the work in 1880, and it was finished in 1882. He remained as pastor until 1885. The church was dedicated to Nuestra Senora Del Refugio—Our Lady of Refuge. The great years were under Rev. Father Augustine Reindon (or Reidon) who looked after the spiritual needs of the people for the next fifteen years. More than likley Rev. de La Valle got his idea for constructing a similiar belfry for the Penasco church. Once a year the French padres got together to have a Funcion or Fiesta honoring Our Lady of Refuge. Mayordomos were usually elected to serve for a year. They went about from house to house collecting for the fiesta. There was a bonfire and lumin-

arios on the eve of the feast, People marched in procession singing alabanzas and visperas. These vespers were usually a chore since they were in Latin but somehow the padre managed to find a few willing and able to help with the service. More often as not if fifteen or twenty priests were together for the occasion they sang the vespers, after which they talked of their homes in France and their experiences as missionaries in New Mexico. Then they spread out matresses and slept on the floor to await the High Mass the next day and the dinner. The people usually had supper after vespers and then a dance. Now and then a dance might get out of hand if hard liquor flowed too freely. On the whole everything went smoothly because it was a religious festival. After the High Mass there was another procession, a dinner and the election of new mayordomos for the next year. The Primicias system was still the way of supporting the padre. Usually he received eggs, meat, chili. Chili strings were taken to Albuquerque, Las Vegas, Santa Fe and Belen where they were sold for about a dollar and a half a string, depending on grade and quality. If every family paid its quota in the parish the padre usually had a garage full of chili, little of which he used himself since chili for his personal use was always available to him in any home. Rev. Simon Arbenathe served Puerto for ten years until Rev. Alphonsus Haelterman was assigned to Puerto. He remained here until 1927. His successor was the beloved Padre Jose Pugens, a man who didn't believe too much in doctors and sought to cure himself. When he went to Our Lady of Sorrows in Las Vegas he tried to treat himself for an illness that he imagined he had. As it turned out he made matters worse and had to be taken to a hospital over his vigorous protests. He died shortly afterwards. He had a heart attack and thought he had asthma. Fathr Lomme and Father Teehan told him he should go to the hospital but he protested saying that before long he would be in good shape. He was as well loved in Las Vegas as in Puerto. Rev. Dumarest was

the next pastor. He later went to Isleta where he died. He was the brother of the author of the book on Cochiti. He was also a writer and artist in his own right. When the county seat was changed to Santa Rosa the padre built a house in that town next to the church and Puerto became a mision. But the pastor in Santa Rosa was also known as the pastor of Puerto. Msgr. Philip Cassidy became the next pastor. He was a native of the Mora area where his father had a mercantile store. Red haired and freckled, he enjoyed time out for fishing. No man wore a brighter smile than Padre Felipe when he came home with a good catch. He could talk about how he was going to fix the fish until your mouth watered. Sometimes there was the big one that got away. Dan Cassidy, his father, would come by during the spring and summer, and off to the water they would go leaving their cares behind. Despite the fact that both had back ailments they proved to be good fishermen.

Rev. James T. Burke came from Boston. He soon won the hearts of the people of Puerto and no one was aware that he was not from New Mexico. He was quite devoted to his people and sought to keep up the old customs in spite of the many empty crumbling adobe homes. The exodus of Israel out of Egypt was no more devastating than the trek of the people of Puerto to Santa Rosa, Fort Sumner and adjacent towns. Not a few went to Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Las Vegas. With the wool industry a thing of the past, droughts becoming more frequent, irrigation still many years off, Puerto seemed doomed. When you stand off a distance and see the few homes huddled together the scriptural text "solitary as a sparrow on a rooftop" comes to mind. It is said that Fr. Dumarest opened a parochial school here staffed by social workers from the East. We are more inclined to believe that Msgr. Cassidy started this school, or definitely Fr. Burke. Msgr. Cassidy later served as pastor at St. Anne's in Santa Fe. Fr. Burke went to Our Lady of Sorrows in Las Vegas. Msgr. Tito Melendez also served

both Santa Rosa and Puerto.

Puerto gave its quota of boys in every war including the Civil War. At times many of the boys in the Civil War had to go A.W.O.L. from Fort Bascom, Fort Sumner, Fort Union in order to get home for the spring planting. Once the planting was done there were weekend leaves for irrigating. The tough time was in the fall for the harvest. Indians were especially aware of such home comings and would often hide along the river banks to pounce on the unwary. A number of Puerto boys lost their lives this way. Sometimes when the men were away the Indians raided homes for captives to be sold to the Cheyennes or to be traded in Mexico. Many War Widows were made so because of the Indians. At La Questa alone down the river not too far from Puerto the Indians killed eleven men in 1863 who were returning for the planting season. This explains why Carleton and other officials often looked the other way instead of conducting court martials. The quota for Puerto was high in every war according to the population. During World War I Panteleon Madrid and Sixto Chavez gave their lives. Others in uniform during this conflict were Louis Page, Jose Valverde, Andres Paiz, Miguel Chavez, Demesio Lucero, Sixto Chavez, Adolfo Chavez, Martin Chavez, Mariano Luna, Antonio Lopez, Carlos Arguello, Salomon Paiz, Charles Gerhardt, James (Iago or Santiago) Bonney, Esequiel Garcia, Jacabo Salazar, Andres Paiz, Jose Leon Salazar, Celso Griego, Pablo Flores, Tomas Nieto, Esequiel Trujillo, Francisco Leal, and a number of others. The remarkable thing is that about as many served in this was as served in the Civil War. The list in the other wars was also long and honorable. A number of the men moved to the coal mining towns when these opened around Raton. Names like Celso Baca, Chaves, Salazar found in Puerto are also found in the books in Dawson, Yankee, Koehler and such places. When these mining towns folded up they moved to Las Vegas, Raton, Springer, Albuquerque, Santa Fe. Some returned to Puerto to farm. Los Alamos re-

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ceived many of the families during World War Two as did many of the Defense Plants on the West coast. It would not be hard to imagine people from Puerto de Luna in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Miami. The old days of primicias and the old customs such as funciones are passing. Now and then an old timer will talk about his days in the river town, and of the stories his grandfather told him of the buffalo hunts, the Indian raids, the severe droughts, the happy times when there were no paved roads, no electric lights, no T.V. sets. Today the few families that remain think of themselves as modern as TV and electronics. Perhaps they are in some ways, and no doubt enjoy these things to their fullest capacity since they are in a rural area unhurried by the pace that is catching up with Albuquerque. Las Vegas and other college towns. Puerto de Luna likes to think of itself as the pearl in the Land of Enchantment. It may some day awake to the fact that it might be a summer resort. If it likes to dwell in the past it is not in terms of Billy the Kid and his rustling activities but as the once proud county seat that acknowledged defeat only because it could not fight the strong railroad combine. Perhaps they really didn't want to. Puerto retains a peace no one can take away.

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